

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today helped the House pass legislation that would immediately provide up to 13 weeks of extended unemployment benefits in every state to workers exhausting the 26 weeks of regular unemployment benefits. Last month, the U.S. unemployment level experienced the largest monthly spike in 20 years, going from 5.0 percent in April to 5.5 percent in May. When those who have already exhausted their unemployment benefits are factored into the equation, the unemployment rate would be closer to 10 percent. In New York, the amount of long-term unemployed persons is about 36 percent of the unemployed. The U.S. economy has lost nearly 325,000 jobs this year and 8.5 million Americans are unemployed.

"All across New York and the entire country, hard-working people have lost their jobs in this week economy and need a helping hand to support themselves and their families," Hinchey said. "With such a weak job market, many people are beginning to need unemployment assistance for longer periods of time so they can get by while they continue to search for work. This is a very difficult time for many Americans and it's incumbent upon all of us to help our fellow Americans and their families get through this period."

The legislation approved in the House today would benefit 3.8 million unemployed Americans -- providing up to 13 weeks of extended unemployment benefits in every state to workers exhausting the 26 weeks of regular unemployment benefits. In states with levels of unemployment six percent or higher, an additional 13 weeks would be available, for a total of 26 weeks of extended benefits. The legislation is paid for through the federal unemployment trust funds, which have more than enough reserves to cover the cost.

While extending unemployment benefits is one of the most cost-effective and fast-acting ways to stimulate the economy, the Bush Administration opposed the legislation considered in the House today.